Mary Ward Week 2018
"This seemed the way, that they should first know it, after desire and endeavour for it a little, and that God would do the rest..."

- M. Ward, Liege April 1619 Retreat Notes
Rejoicing in our Mary Ward Circle of Friends

“It is a great ingratitude and one of the greatest to think that all things come by chance, ... and I verily think it is the best and easiest way to virtue to take everything be it never so little as from God.”

(1617: Second Speech of Reverend Mother Chief Superior)

“This seemed the way, that they should first know it, after desire and endeavour for it a little, and that God would do the rest...”

(Liege, April 1619, Retreat notes)

Recent years have seen an increase in the ways that Mary Ward women and their associates are finding common ground across Congregatio Jesu and IBVM-Loreto boundaries, and across religious and lay boundaries. Praying together and for each other, living as one community, working and planning together, sharing facilities and conferences, networking in so many ways, we are weaving threads that link our circle of friends. This does not happen by chance, but from the hand of God.

What unites us all is our commitment to Jesus, and our desire to bring the charism which Mary Ward received from God into dialogue with our times. Last year we reflected on the fact that she was called to “something different”. This year we are listening to the little movements of hope as we discover a common purpose with a circle of friends so much wider than we are used to.

Our community in Manila is a definite mix - two houses, nineteen sisters and novices, a mixture of CJ-IBVM, from eight nationalities, four IBVM provinces and one CJ province. When asked to prepare this year’s Mary Ward Week booklet, we decided that the Spirit was calling us all to reflect on ways we are working together across the globe. Eight different pairs or groups - comprising both IBVM and CJ, sisters and coworkers from varied nations - were asked to write a shared reflection on the deeper meaning they have found in a recent experience, centering this on a thought from Mary Ward. These reflections are only a sample of the many experiences that could have been chosen - of sharing retreats, facilitating each other’s assemblies, giving lectures, taking choirs to visit schools in other nations, a CJ sister joining the UN Loreto Office, the shared House of Prayer and more. This little taste might encourage each province to initiate a small step nearer home.
O Parent of Parents and Friend of Friends

You led Mary Ward into a new way of being, in companionship with your Son

At the service of the mission.

As women and men striving to live the Just Soul virtues of

Freedom, Justice and Sincerity,

we ask You to teach us how You want us to better fulfil our mission

in an everchanging and broken world

to which we desire to be sent in Your name.

As always, we make our prayer in the name of Jesus,

Your Son and our companion on the journey. Amen

Venerable Mary Ward, pray for us and give us your spirit.

Our task now is to reflect on these experiences: what are they suggesting to each one as we pray through this week in China or Canada, Ireland or India, Germany or Ghana, Kenya or Korea. We cannot all be at the cutting edge of shared endeavour, but we can pray for each other; we can find ways to connect via internet; we can talk locally to encourage change globally. Creative thinking could find ways...if we do the little we can, God will do the rest.

As you reflect on each day, allow a phrase to engage or challenge you. Let it link to your own life. Speak with God a little about how you feel as you reflect on this day’s information.

Final prayer for each day - borrowed from last year!
In John Chapter 4, Jesus initiates a conversation with a woman. She is from another group, a minority living amidst all the fears and prejudices that have built up on both sides over years: “they are different, not like us”; “they don’t keep the law”, or “they think their law is best”; “we worship in the Temple and they only worship on a mountain”.

The woman has the courage to approach an unknown male at the well. Jesus asks for her help. Slowly her guard comes down, the conversation deepens. Amid challenge and search, she becomes a bearer of the Good News to her village - an apostle to a group who might otherwise not have encountered Jesus.

What might Jesus be inviting us to in our reflection on our encounters with ‘the other’? What preconceived ideas are these encounters challenging?

Mary Ward’s last words encourage us to “Cherish God’s vocation.” Each one of us, CJ, IBVM or colleague, has a special call from God. As we reflect on the ways some of our circle of friends are responding to that call, on what they are learning in this collaboration, what outreach is that suggesting to us?
April 2017. For the first time ever there was a joint meeting in Rome of the CJ and IBVM Generalate teams and Province Leaders. This built on years of collaboration between the Generalate teams.

“Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.” I felt that this was so true. I nearly heard Mary Ward telling us: “Good! You have been too long away from one another. It is time that you begin to move forward as ONE BODY!” It is one of the first small powerful steps towards this possibility of UNION. We need to take similar steps with the entire BODY - the Mary Ward Family - with the desire that we be ONE, forgetting all the boundaries we and history have created, seeking to know and do the will of God. Perhaps the Friend of all friends is waiting to see us moving together so that the Church can acknowledge Mary Ward, “that incomparable woman” as a great saint who worked tirelessly for the defence and propagation of faith at a time when no other woman dared to do what she did.

We walked into a world of strangers and when we left I felt that there is truly no difference in and among us - we were already ONE. Together we reflected, prayed, shared, dined, and laughed a lot. We made new friends. We discovered the similarities in our lives and dreams and aspirations. I was reminded of what Mary Ward said, ... there is no difference between men and women. Today in our context she would say there is no difference between the CJs and the IBVMs. We were there together because of her and in her name. It was homecoming. There was much joy and celebration just like the lost and found precious stone in the gospel. I felt proud of and grateful for our common heritage. We Mary Ward women are like siblings coming together for a common sharing and celebrations.
Our God is a God who does wondrous works in and through us. Therefore whenever we make a little effort God does God's part. This is what Mary Ward experienced in her life - Jesus leading her step by step. This gave her tremendous energy to seek and find God's will in all that she did. It is an invitation for us to take small initiatives and trust in God's providence like Mary Ward.

Ita Moynihan IBVM (Ireland) and Pratima Pinto CJ (India)

Think back over our 400 year history: our fragile existence after the suppression;
the courage of those women who held to a dream;
the persistence of new voices across the centuries, carrying a hope for recognition so that union of hearts and minds might have a structure within which to serve the Gospel, to nurture the faith of others with greater efficacy.
If “something new” emerged in our structures, what would we have to lose?
What might we gain?
In Latin America over the past few years the CJ provinces (Brazil, Argentina, Chile and mission in Cuba) and IBVM Peru Region have been journeying together. We have shared life and Mary Ward’s desire and passion to be companions of Jesus.

Our experience in Latin America so far has gifted us with the lived experience of “union of minds and hearts” in a very real and concrete way. The sharing of life – giving spaces through gatherings, meetings, retreats, holidays, as well as the revision of our formation programmes together and some lived experiences with sisters in initial formation, have all contributed to our experience of our common Mary Ward mission. We are aware of our reality – different generations, different cultures and different viewpoints - and yet in the diversity and differences we draw from the same fundamental source and inheritance which unites us. On meeting to consider ‘formation issues’ we became aware that barriers and frontiers are non–existent. Revising our formation programmes together gave us the opportunity of discovering that we share similar Constitutions, as well as time for long conversations about formation and Mary Ward’s desire ‘that they may be one’ - sprouting from a common source as dreamt of by Mary herself.

In the various meetings we began to put names on faces, and to realize the common treasure we share in the same charism at the service of the faith and promotion of justice. Through this shared charism we began to see ourselves as members of one family, with traditions arising from two historic pathways, and yet living the deeper experience of truly being sisters.

The shared experience in its many forms, and especially in the area of formation, has offered us the gift of ‘tasting and feeling’ that the world is our home, and that we are called to be sent beyond our own (province/region) boundaries, called to spread our wings, enriched by our sharing and experience of our common IBVM – CJ roots in the context of the Just Soul. Its values of Freedom, Integrity and Justice drive us forward to continue our commitment to the reign of God in these parts of the continent with new vitality derived from our common heritage.
We feel we are one family with a common vocation and foundress. We have been advancing in unity in issues of initial formation and have shared experiences of ongoing formation. Another step will be a deeper living of our universal vocation in the crossing of boundaries, integrating our differences and embracing diversity in the complex and interesting context in which we are called to live.

Let us follow Mary Ward, a woman represented by images of someone on the move, walking stick in hand and one foot forward. May she guide us in this passionate adventure of ‘stepping out’!

Ann O’Connell IBVM (Peru) and Estela Grignola CJ (Argentina)

Our core spirituality provides the ground out of which collaboration in Latin America has flourished. What aspects of our spirituality do you find most energizing?

What possibilities emerge for CJ-IBVM provinces who are neighbours in a region?
Late June to early July 2017, about 60 delegates from 21 countries - lay men and women and sisters from both CJ and IBVM gathered in South Africa for the Loreto Education conference. It was difficult to identify who was CJ or who IBVM. We felt wonderful to belong to one wide family of Mary Ward. We actually “crossed boundaries” of nations, language, culture, experience and indeed celebrated our oneness in diversity. We felt that we, as Mary Ward schools educators, shared a common vision to form and transform young people, especially girls, to become agents of the positive change in our society.

As Mary Ward educators we were invited through our theme, **To be rooted, responsive and relevant.** To be rooted in Christ, in Mary Ward and Ignatian spirituality. To respond to the needs of the students under our care, inspire them and light their path. We were reminded that academic achievements are not enough but we are to direct the students to their destiny. To be relevant as educators, we need to play our role well to enable the students to attain their goals in life and to help them feel a sense of belonging to God, to us and to the society.

The conference was an opportunity to express our oneness, and deepen that awareness within our Mary Ward family and so begin a new way forward for education ministry in our schools. We discovered that the GC calls for both CJ and IBVM had some similarities: there is a CJ call for collaboration which states that, “Never to do alone what we could do better together in partnership”. The IBVM call is to “Create oneness that moves us across boundaries.”
Coming to the end of the conference, it was unanimously decided to rename the conference as Mary Ward International Schools’ Conference. There is a Mary Ward Schools Document (Mary Ward Schools’ Compass) produced as a result of our work together. It will be an exciting and challenging guideline to help us respond in a relevant way to 21st Century education. This is a significant shift in the CJ/IBVM journey together in the sense that we began the conference in terms of Loreto and CJ schools and ended with some guidelines for Mary Ward Schools. Collaboration was further advanced with a proposal for a structure to ensure ongoing opportunity for an international exchange of experience among students and teachers.

Lenah Mambo IBVM (Zambia) and Jethro Musosimoyo (Mary Ward Primary School, Kwekwe, Zimbabwe)

Imagine the impact on the world if every student in Mary Ward Schools left school or college fired with a commitment to God and to live with freedom, justice and sincerity!

What could you do to encourage teachers in a school near you?

Mary Ward wanted women’s contribution to be recognised as a way of strengthening faith. Working with both women and men to change understandings of our roles takes great sensitivity to culture, to what is required for human dignity, and to processes that enable change. What have I learned in my life so far as I have faced and embraced a new understanding of the role of women?
“The felicity of this estate was a singular freedom...to refer all to God. Being grounded in this (the virtues of freedom, justice and sincerity), we should gain at God’s hand true wisdom and ability to perform all such other things as the perfection of this Institute exacteth of us.”

(1st Nov 1615: Mary Ward’s letter about the ‘Just Soul’ experience. St. Omer)

Human trafficking is defined in the Palermo statement as: “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation... The exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs...."

Today IBVM and CJ women are working to combat human trafficking in Romania, Albania, Slovakia, Austria, Spain, the UK, Italy, Ireland, India, many parts of Africa, Australia, USA, and Canada. At the UN a network has been formed with Mary Ward sisters from all of these countries and representing both branches, sharing resources, campaigning together and learning new thinking to help combat this heinous crime in our world today.

In Europe many Mary Ward Sisters are working together, from both CJ and IBVM. Three sisters, alongside local professional staff, work full time in this field in Romania, Albania and Slovakia/Austria. Their work includes direct action with trafficked victims, in shelters and on the streets, and also engages in prevention, advocacy and awareness raising against human trafficking.
St. Irenaeus tells us “The glory of God is the person fully alive”. This glory of God shines forth from every human face, the face of every man, woman, and child, hurt by abuse or abusers. This is the justice we are called to bring about as followers of Mary Ward: accompanying victims so they can “appear such as they are”. Only when we are able to bear the sight of this glory, are we able to feel the unspeakable pain of lives threatened and destroyed. This brings us down from the ivory tower of our comfort zones, our personal worries and routines and makes us engage with people to find out what is oppressing them and driving them to despair. This urges us to become involved in the changes that must take place for justice to be realised, by developing all means possible to reach the goal of freedom for vulnerable peoples; to find freedom for exploited refugees and children used for begging; to find safety and eventually, economic empowerment, with those who have been bought and sold as slaves in our time.

Bohdana Bezakova CJ (Austria)     Adina Balan CJ (Romania)     Imelda Poole IBVM (Albania)

How do you feel learning that these women are putting their hand to works so congruous to our times, drawing strength from the “Just Soul”?

How do you live out the “Just Soul” in your life situation?
Looking at the picture of Mary Ward (PL22) and her companions, we are invited into the open space in their circle. We can imagine ourselves having a comfortable conversation with them. The summer school with IBVM and CJ mirrored this experience. We were invited into that circle as friends, companions, and disciples in modern times. Sitting with them our hearts had free and open access to each other, to Mary Ward and to God.

All of us, 10 participants, plus 3 lecturers of IBVM and CJ, share the name of the woman who founded our Institute. We spent 3 weeks studying the history and spirituality of Mary Ward. We read original documents and studied the background and history of the Church and her times. We shared our life and personal calling. We learned about each province’s ministries or native cultures. Through this sharing we could understand and encourage one another. We already knew of many communities across the world, yet being together and in conversations we came to understand so much more about them. Our summer school is over, but strong bonds of friendship remain.

Personally, I was deeply moved when we visited Mary Ward’s tombstone at Osbaldwick. Over 400 years ago a woman had a dream. One seed fell to the ground: that seed was broken enough to bear much fruit. We gathered around her as her companions today. How wonderful that we have the will to follow her way of life. I asked God to lead me closer to Christ with passion and love like Mary Ward. We need to live in her spirituality and spread her heritage in the world.

Mary Ward had free and open access to God. How free she was, a woman with a burning desire to follow the will of God despite her suffering. She invites us to follow her way, knowing that we are one with many companions across the world. We are all seeds which will bear abundant fruit in the places where we live.
We are the descendants of an incomparable woman
We abide in truth
We love sincerity
We are a voice of justice,
We live in freedom and refer all to God
We are carriers of Christ
We are contemplative in action.
We desire more
We love to Be more
We love to Do more
We give and reach out more.

Cecilia Insuk Lee CJ (Korea) and Selvi Adaikalam IBVM (East Timor)
From 1851 when Teresa Ball sent sisters to work with the destitute families in Manchester, both branches of the IBVMs [we differentiated ourselves, until 2003, as the Irish Branch and the Roman branch] had good relations.

“Returning to the sources” after Vatican II inevitably brought us more together in our search for a deepening of Mary Ward’s spirit.

In 2002, our Provincials in England, Bernie Boland and Cecilia Goodman, took positive steps to bring us even closer by founding the LINKS group. This body consisted of five members from each branch, who met roughly three times a year in each others’ houses to discuss matters of mutual interest, to get to know each other and to arrange activities for both English provinces.

From this group came the yearly Mary Ward Retreats in St Omer, Liege, Augsburg, York and London. Study days were arranged e.g. ‘The history of both provinces’; The four Volumes of Mary Ward Sources edited by Ursula Dirmeier. Day outings were organised e.g. to Iron Acton [home of Mary Poyntz], to East Anglia (Sister Dorothea etc), to Baddesley Clinton [John Gerard] and Mary Ward’s London. During Mary Ward Week, those who lived in London met for Sunday Mass at St Ethelreda’s Ely Place (almost certainly attended by ‘ours’ in London in 1620).

Two years ago, our Provincials decided that the Links group would be replaced by LINKS PLUS, with two representatives from each province arranging one event a year for both provinces. The first one took place in Mary Ward Week in Osballdwick and the Bar Convent January 2017. Next year, 2018, is to be a study day on Mother Michael Corcoran IBVM (Irish Province).
We, the CJ and IBVM of the United Kingdom, are fortunate that we do not live too far away from each other, that we have had a long tradition of association and now a flowering of good friendships.

Magdalen O’Neill IBVM and Ann Stafford CJ (UK)

The first ones appointed must have wondered if these meetings would lead to anything. Their small beginnings have now enriched so many through events like the Mary Ward Summer School and the Friends of Mary Ward Conference this year.

Can you look back on any meeting you have had with a sister from the other segment of Mary Ward’s company, which seemed by chance and you now see as coming from the hand of God?

Talk with others to brainstorm ways we could use the internet to make links when we are not so fortunate to live as close neighbours.
DAY SEVEN

The “Friends of Mary Ward” conference was a unique opportunity to meet 120 participants from all over the world, from many cultures and traditions. The title of the conference was: ‘Mary Ward, Prophetic Woman’. This week was an experience of encountering; certainly one of visiting Mary Ward’s world but more importantly encountering friends of Mary Ward from all over the world. Whether this happened around a meal, in group conversations or on the many walks to the places Mary Ward had been, I was reminded of the basic truth that what is most important are the relationships we have; with one another, with our God and with all of creation. What united us was not the verbal communication, but the nonverbal one, human love, Christian love, and last but not least, our love for Mary Ward.

Our time together was about removing barriers and building bridges. What emerged as a key element of the conference was the sense that we are called not to be about living in the past, but rather to be willing to embrace this new thing that God is doing in the hearts and minds of all those who love and follow Mary Ward.

The virtues Mary Ward wrote about in 1615 after a very significant prayer experience are not only an ideal for sisters or women in general; they are relevant for all those who want to follow Jesus today. Mary lived out these virtues - freedom, sincerity and justice - and became, for us, her companions, a vivid model and example. Even in times of trial and darkness, when her faith was put in danger by the Church's leaders, she chose to follow the path of truth. Her attitude is a lesson for us in the 21st century. Our society needs the sincerity and transparency proposed by our founder, and as Mary Ward's friends, we are called upon to live them in our context.
A spirit of openness and oneness was central to our time together: CJ’s and IBVM’s, lay and professed. We are all called to search our hearts and our souls, to find God in all things and to respond to the ways God is calling us to transform the world. This is what it means to seek the truth and to live as Mary Ward lived.

The courage, resilience and powerful collective identity that we hold as friends of Mary Ward is such a gift; we must build up this network. We must follow the tenacity of Mary Ward and of the many women who followed after her to help transform our world.

Ann McGowan (Mary Ward Centre, Canada) and Anu Tampu CJ (Romania)

*What does “Mary Ward, Prophetic woman” suggest to you?*

*How can we build resilience in ourselves and those we encounter today?*
Mary Ward has two houses in Manila. One, begun late 2013, is the Mary Ward Study House, rented jointly by CJ and Loreto. The other, begun late 2015, is the novitiate of the Loreto Australia South-East Asian province. There, novices from Vietnam, Australia, Canada and Bangladesh are accompanied on their journey by their Australian and Indian formators.

In Mary Ward House sisters from Korea, China and now USA come for one to four years study. Vietnamese, Australian and Korean sisters, taking advantage of a variety of short courses, have stayed for periods varying between two and six weeks. Sisters from India, Australia, Vietnam, Mauritius and Spain studying at EAPI, and one from UK, have been visitors for major celebrations. We have had Generalate and provincial visitations and hosted an international IBVM meeting. Two ‘senior citizens’, CJ and IBVM, are the still point in this changing scene. One Korean sister runs a learning centre for local poor children, keeping us aware of those on the margins. Two ‘Balik-bayans’ (returnee Filipinas) one from the Australian province and one currently a novice from Canada, have helped us know more of our host nation, but we limp badly on Filipino inculturation.

What has living “the oneness that crosses boundaries” taught us? Horizons have been stretched - we are more aware of global events, especially for sisters from Korea and China, where language and distance have hindered connection with the wider world. Assumptions are questioned when we live amid difference and change. Young women from cultures where privileged status is given to past leaders, note a different understanding of leadership. Sisters from secular cultures have been moved by the deep religious simplicity of those from cultures which draw on more prayerful traditions.

When some are habited and some wear secular dress, discussions are frequent about why and how change occurred in Western religious life, or why change did not occur in other cultures. Background on these issues helps lessen judgements and prejudices. Living close to a novitiate that forms in a less traditional way fosters reflection on essentials. What will enable personal growth in freedom, justice and integrity and what is essential to deepen the following of Jesus in Mary Ward’s circle of friends?
Unity can flourish amidst difference when we share deep spiritual roots. Eating together - managing *kim chi* and chop sticks, or a roast, using knife and fork - unites in many ways. Deeper discussions on the Gospels or Mary Ward, sharing personal stories, getting help with assignments in this foreign language and weekly interactions with those living in the novitiate build on this. Friendships and having a purpose - wanting this union to work - have enabled us all to accept some things we find tiresome and to talk through difficult issues we need to address, so we can keep moving towards this goal.

“Communio” at the heart of God - difference and unity, in love - takes on a lived significance.

Bosco Lee CJ and Christine Burke IBVM (Manila)

*What prejudices and assumptions have you been challenged to change over the years?*

*What has stayed with you after this week of reflecting on some aspects of our journeying together?*

*Is there anything you would like to suggest to either of the leadership teams?*